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Rep. Linda Orange



- ☐ Business
- ☐ Children
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Environment
- ☐ Major Public Acts
- ☐ Senior Citizens

AFFECTING:

CALL OR WRITE FOR YOUR
COPY OF THIS YEAR'S ACTS

At the Capitol:
Legislative Office Building,
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Hartford, CT 06106-1591
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In the District
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Please Keep in Touch

Budget Highlights

- Co-payments and premiums were eliminated for Medicaid and HUSKY clients. We also extended state benefits to legal immigrants.
- The ConnPACE asset test and estate recovery was eliminated.
- We added \$4.6 million for the Department of Mental Retardation waiting list.
- The \$500 property tax credit was reinstated beginning in the 2005 tax year.
- The budget added \$1 million in financial aid for students at the state's public and private colleges and universities.
- We added \$3.4 million for more state troopers.

Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Protection

Farmers and those involved in agriculture deserve their own focused and reliable executive department. Recognizing the importance of agriculture to our state's economy, the General Assembly passed legislation that will block the merging of the Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Protection.

Re-Importing Drugs from Canada for ConnPACE

I supported a new law that requires the state of Connecticut to evaluate the feasibility of re-importing prescription drugs from Canada. The report will weigh the cost effectiveness, any legal implications, and health and safety issues that may come from this program. With the high cost of medications and the amount of burden it places on our seniors, I will be eagerly awaiting this report.

Estate Recovery and Asset Test for ConnPACE Repealed

As promised, the state of Connecticut repealed the never enforced ConnPACE asset test and estate recovery provision. I voted against these draconian provisions last year and was pleased to support the repeal. It makes us all breathe a sigh of relief.

LINDA A. ORANGE

State Representative



48TH DISTRICT

Colchester
East Haddam

Dear Friends,

Another legislative year has drawn to a close and I want to share highlights of the 2004 legislative session with you.

Public safety is an issue I take very seriously and I am pleased to announce that I was one of six legislators appointed to the General Assembly's Homeland Security Working Group, which this year helped secure passage of a measure to establish the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) under the State Department of the Military. Legislation creating the administrative agency delivered the tools and organizational powers that have been sought-after by first responders across the state.

I assure you I will also continue to pursue other legislative priorities so important to our towns, namely protecting our environment, funding education, and health and social services. Our towns are growing rapidly and I know how important it is for us to provide the necessary services while maintaining our rural quality of life.

Included in this newsletter are highlights of the 2004 legislative session. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to call me at 800-842-8267. Your concerns are essential to our decision-making process. As always, it is a privilege to serve you as state representative.

Linda

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news

Home Heating Oil Dealers

In order to protect consumers, legislation was passed which requires home heating oil dealers to display their state registration numbers in all advertisements and dealer prepared information. It also requires that the dealer's insurance company notify the Department of Consumer Protection in writing when it cancels an insurance policy. The law requires that dealers have general liability insurance coverage and \$1 million coverage for environmental damage. The Consumer Protection Commissioner can revoke the registration of a dealer without the required insurance.

This bill also requires that when home heating oil dealers advertise a price, they must offer that price for at least 24 hours or until the next advertised price, whichever comes first. (PA 04-194)

State Police Cruisers

Police vehicles are recognized as a symbol of public safety throughout the state of Connecticut. These vehicles are put in situations in which most vehicles are not, such as high speed chases and collisions. In order to better protect the officers in these situations, all police cruisers purchased after the 2005 calendar year will be required to have manufacturer installed fire suppression units. These systems will release a chemical to put out fires and can be activated both manually and automatically. (PA 04-133)

Sales Tax Free Week Is Back!

As a boon for parents in Connecticut, the General Assembly has restored the popular Sales Tax Free Week for clothing and footwear costing less than \$300 in the third week of August, 2004. (The Sales Tax Free Week would have expired at the end of FY '04.) (PA 04-218)

The Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

Homeland security is an increasingly important issue. In order to ensure the efficient and effective deployment of homeland security duties, the General Assembly has created an autonomous Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. The new department assumes the purposes, duties, and powers of the Office of Emergency Management and the Division of Homeland Security under the Department of Public Safety. Under the bill, a state-wide advisory council will be created to make recommendations to the department regarding the distribution of federal funds and instituting homeland security initiatives. (PA 04-219)

Registering Underground Fuel Tank Removers

Over the course of the last several years, the legislature has encouraged the removal of underground fuel tanks. These underground tanks have been responsible for millions of dollars worth of damage and contamination. We have funded the removal and clean up of these sites through the Department of Environmental Protection. Unfortunately, several contractors have not properly removed these tanks or remediated the polluted soil around them. Therefore, we passed a bill to ensure only qualified companies can do this work. The bill prohibits a license to be given for an underground fuel tank removal unless the company:

- has completed a hazardous material training program,
- possesses at least \$1 million in liability insurance, and
- presents a surety bond of at least \$250,000.

The bill also explicitly makes the Home Improvement Act apply to the removal of residential underground heating tank systems. (PA 04-21)

Allied Health Workforce Needs

Because of the continuing shortage of health care workers, the General Assembly passed a bill to create a 16-member Connecticut Allied Health Workforce Policy Board to work in conjunction with the Connecticut Career Ladder Advisory Committee to address the employment needs in the health care community. This new board must report its recommendations to address allied health shortages by January 1, 2006. (PA 04-220)

State Construction Contracts

A top priority this session included establishing a fair and objective state construction contracting process to rebuild public trust. Building on the reforms and prequalification process in last year's legislation, we made a number of changes to refine DPW's contract selection process and strengthen the contractor evaluations requirement in order to promote fairness and quality construction.

Also, we clarified the communication prohibition between public officials, state employees and potential contractor bidders if it results in the bidder receiving inside information other bidders would not receive. The bill disqualifies any bidder who receives confidential or non-public information about an unadvertised contract.

The General Assembly also took action to create a more stringent process for a "Fast-Track" or an "Emergency No-Bid" project. As of October 1, 2004, any agency that seeks a "fast-track, no-bid" project must certify and document to the Government, Administration and Elections Committee that an emergency situation exists that justifies an exception to the typical competitive bid process. If the legislature approves a "fast-track" contract, the State Properties Review Board must review and approve or disapprove the contract within 30 days. (PA 04-141)

Veterans

The General Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to Connecticut's honorable servicemen and women. Legislation was passed that enables both active duty servicemen and women and veterans or their immediate families to continue to receive certain veterans' property tax exemptions if they move to a new town within that assessment year. Tax assessors must provide a certificate that verifies eligibility to each person who receives an exemption. (PA 04-40)

Any veteran, honorably discharged from active service in the U. S. Armed Forces, regardless of war service, is now eligible for burial in the state veterans' cemetery and admission to the Veterans' Home. (PA 04-169)

Organ Donation Registry

Legislation was enacted creating an organ donor registry using Department of Motor Vehicles records. The registry will be available to organ donor procurement agencies. In order to protect the wishes of the donating individual, two witnesses must be present when the driver's license, indicating "donor," is signed. In the event of an accident, this formality allows access to the donor registry if the license is missing. (PA 04-122)

Ethics

As we face difficult ethical issues in our state, the legislature felt it was necessary to take steps to restore the public's trust in government. New legislation:

- Increases fines from \$2,000 to \$10,000, and extends the statute of limitations from three to five years for ethics violations.
- Limits contributions and defines a Legal Defense Fund, while making donations public record.
- Expands the State Ethics Commission from seven people to nine people.
- Ensures continued funding for Connecticut's three watchdog organizations: the State Elections Enforcement Commission, the State Ethics Commission, and the Freedom of Information Commission.
- Restructures the current affidavit policy to stop inappropriate gift-giving.
- Increases oversight and management of the Governor's Mansion Conservancy.